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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES INVESTMENTS TO STRENGTHEN FOOD SAFETY

More sanitarians, increased restaurant inspections support resident health

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced plans to strengthen food safety and restaurant inspections.

"Chicago's restaurant scene is rightly regarded as one of the best in the world," said Mayor Emanuel. "By increasing the overall number of sanitarians, we can accomplish even more – ensuring our food supply remains safe, our restaurants stay clean and everyone can enjoy their meal, all without passing the bill on to our residents."

In the Mayor's proposed budget investments, CDPH will hire 22 additional food inspectors, or sanitarians, over the next two years as part of an ongoing effort to ensure the safety of all Chicago food establishments. The increase in sanitarians will not only ensure Chicago's food supply remains safe for residents and visitors, but that CDPH will also be in compliance with state laws and federal guidelines regarding frequency of inspections.

"Chicago's reputation as a food city is only increasing and so is our commitment to keeping consumers safe," says BACP Commissioner Rosa Escareno. "That requires more health inspectors. BACP is raising the price of retail food licenses to help pay for the expansion of the city's team of sanitarians. License fees will increase on a 3 tiered system, with the smallest restaurants paying the least."

As part of the Mayor's proposed budget, BACP will also adjust its restaurant licensing fee structure to pay for the increased number of sanitarians. Even after implementation, Chicago's fee structure will still be less than those of nearby suburbs like Evanston and Oak Park and other large cities, including Los Angeles and Houston.

"Our goal is to ensure the food you buy in every restaurant and every grocery store is safe for consumption. Our current sanitarians have already been lauded for their efficiency and the quality of their work," said CDPH Commissioner Julie Morita, M.D., referencing a recent report by the Inspector General that also called for an increase in staffing. "By investing in more sanitarians, we are investing in our restaurants and a healthier city for everyone."

The new tiered payment structure provides additional relief for small businesses. Establishments that are less than 1,000 square feet in size will see no increase in licensing fees. Fees for larger establishments will increase in proportion to their size. The top tier, establishments over 10,000 square feet, will increase by \$225/year. The new fees will also be pegged to inflation.

Changes to inspection processes will also further incentivize establishments to ensure they consistently meet health code requirements. Any food establishment's initial inspection will remain free, while CDPH's re-inspection fee, leveraged only against eateries that fail the initial inspection, will increase from \$50 to \$100.

The increase in staffing follows a number of improvements CDPH has made over the past several years to increase efficiency and better meet the requirements of the state law and federal guidance. This includes [launching a new system](#) that analyses public data to identify Chicago restaurants most likely to face health code challenges, allowing CDPH to prioritize inspections for those restaurants, helping them resolve any issues as quickly as possible.

CDPH and BACP are charged with ensuring more than 13,500 food establishments – including restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries and convenience stores – meet the city's health code through inspection and licensing.

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